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THE GLORIFICATION OF JEANNE D'ARC AND OTHER  
MURAL DECORATIONS IN  
BURNT WOOD.

By J. WILLIAM FOSDICK.

NOV. 16 TO NOV. 28, INCLUSIVE.

1896.

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J. William Fosdick is a native of Boston, Mass. He first studied drawing and painting at the Boston Art Museum School under Otto Grundmann, subsequently pursuing his studies in Paris, where he passed seven years under Messrs. Boulanger and Lefebvre.

His first commission for burnt wood decorations was executed in 1884 under the supervision of Messrs. McKim, Meade & White. Mr. Fosdick is a member of the Mural Painters and Architectural League of New York, in which city he resides.

## I. The Glorification of Joan of Arc.

The Church of Rome has declared Joan of Arc "venerable," this being the first of many steps in the process of canonization.

It is not through ignorance or lack of respect for the Church that the artist has depicted Joan of Arc with the attributes and symbolism of sainthood. Cast one sweeping glance along the vast line of immortals which the checkered history of France has given the world, and a divine radiance surrounds the slight form of a mere girl, whose unparalleled life and noble purpose gave France her one great lesson in true God-given patriotism.

"The whitest lily on the shield of France,  
With heart of virgin gold."

She still lives in the heart-throb of a nation, whose earnest supplication is that she may be canonized. The artist has endeavored to depict The Maid of Orleans as France sees her, respectfully awaiting the action of the Church.

Here is represented two degrees of devotional homage. Kneeling princes with their body-guards worship Joan of Arc. The Maid, ever hearing the heavenly voices, gazing upwards to the Great White Throne, offering the symbols of her life — the distaff and sword — to the Almighty.

Upon her breast is the white cross, device of her armies, and at her feet two kneeling angels support her coat-of-arms.

Inscribed upon a tablet beneath are her last words —

"My last vows, my last thoughts,  
Are for my God, my Country, and my King."

The huge burst of light against which the form of the Maid is seen bears a double significance, that of a Holy Light, and we

know that her king, Charles VII., employed the full sun as his device.

Angels and lilies form a part of the Heavenly Light, the latter symbolize the maiden's purity as well as the Flower of France.

The pennant upon the left bears the arms of Orleans, that upon the right, the arms of France.

The foliated design of apple leaves and fruit recalls her father's garden where the voices urged her to leave Domrémy and save France.

2. Decorative Wall Panel, Lady Godiva.

"Then she rode forth, clothed on with chastity."

3. Elizabethan Chimney-Place.

Centre: Portrait with old inscription which reads "Elizabeth."

Right: Coat-of arms of the Queen. Left: Arrangement of symbols.

4. Four Screen Panels. Ivy motive with figures.

5. Decorative Head, "Italia." Border, Italian, XV. Cent.

6. Mantel.

Centre: The procession. Left: Rock-a-bye. Right: The swing.

7. The Field of the Cloth of Gold.

A decorative rendering of the historic meeting of Henry VIII. and Francis I., Thursday, June 7, 1520. Henry VIII. upon the spectator's right, Francis I., left.

At this meeting "the fantastic usages of the courts of Love and Beauty were revived once more. The mediæval age had gathered up its departing energies for the last display of its

favorite pastime. Multitudes from the French frontiers, or the populous cities of Flanders, indifferent to the political significance of the scene, swarmed from their dingy homes to gaze on kings, knights, and ladies dressed in their utmost splendor."

8. Decorative portrait of Miss B ———  
Costume XVIII. Century.
9. "Metina." Mediæval Panel.
10. Decorative Figure, A Coquette of the XVIII. Century.
11. Two English Beauties. Decoratively adapted from an old print.
12. Of the Last Empire. Arranged decoratively from an old lithograph.
13. Grecian Panel, The Serenade. Designed for a Music Room.
14. The Coat-of-Arms of George Washington.  
Supposed to have been the origin of the American Flag.
15. Dining-room Inscription. The "Selkirk Grace," said by Robert Burns when visiting the Earl of Selkirk.
16. Hall Inscription.
17. Inscription for a Fire Place. Latin MSS. lettering, XIV. Century.
18. Inscription. Romanesque lettering, beginning of VIII. Century.

19. Gothic Panel, A Monk.
20. Wood Box or Hall Chest. Mediæval Design.
21. Wall Panel, Gothic, Children's Heads.
22. Receptacle for Waste Paper. Mediæval.
23. Memorial Tablet, To Harold.
24. Small study of Lady Godiva.
25. Elaine guarding the Shield of Lancelot.

"Then to her tower she climb'd and took the shield,  
There kept it, and so lived in fantasy."

26. Decorative Portrait, Louis XIV.

Numbers 26 to 32 inclusive, are decoratively adapted from existing portraits.

27. Agnes Sorel.
28. Marie Antoinette.
29. Elizabeth of Austria.
30. Duchesse de Chevreuse.
31. Marie d'Anjou.
32. Gabrielle d'Estrée.
33. Decorative Head, A Fisher Girl.

## ABOUT THE ART OF FIRE ETCHING.

*(Excerpt from the Century Magazine, August, 1896.)*

### HISTORY.

It would be impossible to state positively when this art was first practised. Burnt panels have been found in various parts of Europe, set into ancient furniture, chimney-pieces, and wainscoating. In the museums of Europe there are marriage chests, coffers, and panels dating from the fifteenth century or thereabouts, upon which a species of low relief woodwork, not unlike the so-called "fret saw" work of to-day, has been applied or chiselled out, the flat surface being richly ornamented with fine traceries unmistakably burned with heated points.

In the sacristy of the little octagonal church of Sant' Ercolano at Perugia are some ancient chests decorated with hot irons some four hundred years ago. The art first made its appearance in this country nearly fifty years ago, when Ball Hughes, the English sculptor, residing in Dorchester, Massachusetts, became well-known as a burner of "poker pictures."

### MEANS EMPLOYED.

Formerly, the fire etcher employed copper tools, not unlike soldering irons, set into wooden or other non-conducting handles. These tools cooled rapidly and had to be constantly shifted. What with feeding his fire and blowing it up with hand bellows, it is a wonder that the wood-burner produced anything at all artistic. To-day, the hollow burning point is of platinum, once heated, a never-failing current of naphtha gas burning within, enables the artist to work for hours, wholly independent of forge, bellows, and other paraphernalia. As the old master wood-carvers and violin-makers hoarded flawless, dry wood, so must the wood-burner of to-day keep a vigilant eye upon the lumber yards, and lay in a stock of pure, dry wood. It must be white, free from gum, and soft.

### THE MISSION OF FIRE ETCHING.

The decorations which have best withstood the ravages of time, and are the most chaste and refined, have been produced with the simplest means possible — chisel, mallet, and marble ; chisel and wood ; sheet metal and hammer ; clay and fire. What could be more simple than red-hot iron and wood ? It is obvious that the very simplicity of the art of wood-burning, the unobtrusive quality of its color, and utter impossibility of color discord, render it a safe and valuable means of interior decoration. The art of wood burning may be easily abused. The ignorant may debase it by failing to recognize its proper sphere, but it will become an important factor in the furtherance of pure decoration so long as it is employed by the artist alone ; for surely only the artist can give it that seriousness and strength without which it will be merely a passing fad.